

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 13 are amended. Support for these amendments is contained in at least paragraph [0026] of the specification and Figs. 1-5. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 1, rejects claim 13 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 13 is rewritten in independent form to obviate the rejection. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 13 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, are respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 3, rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,456,279 to Kubo et al. (hereinafter "Kubo"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kubo discloses a liquid crystal display device that has a position information input device over an image-displaying surface of a liquid crystal panel the objective of which is to improve the flatness of a first transparent electrode, thereby preventing connection failures between the position information input device and the underlying image-displaying surface (Abstract). Kubo teaches a complex liquid crystal display device which provides a resin layer 40F in the illumination device 3 shown in Fig. 7. This resin layer 40F has the function of smoothing the formed surface of the transparent electrode 40D (col. 10, lines 22-24). The Office Action attempts to define this resin layer 40F as a cushioning material. However, Applicant respectfully submits that there is no teaching in Kubo that such a resin layer is made of any cushioning material.

Kubo further discloses spacers 40E, clamped between transparent electrodes 40C and 40D (col. 9, lines 55-56). Applicant respectfully submits that, with reference to Fig. 7, it is clear that the spacers 40E are layers removed from the micropisms 8, and as such, are not directly

related to the layer containing the microprisms 8. Rather, the spacers are introduced to facilitate the information exchange between the position information input device and the underlying image-displaying surface of a liquid crystal panel as is described, in exemplary manner, at col. 2, lines 42-52 of Kubo.

Claim 1 recites a spread illumination apparatus comprising: a transparent substrate made of a light-transmissible material and having a light reflection pattern having a number of ridges formed on at least one surface thereof ... wherein a cover formed of a light-transmissible material is integrally provided over the one surface of the transparent substrate sandwiching a cushioning material consisting of a light-transmissible substance in such a manner that the number of ridges are directly covered with the cushioning material. An objective of this construction is at least to provide a cover over the surface to prevent dust generated in an assembly process, or during use, from getting on the transparent substrate. Further, the cushioning material interposed between the transparent substrate and the cover may absorb bends in the cover and protect the transparent substrate against damage while maintaining excellent light conductivity (see specification at paragraph [0051]). Additionally, this construction of the spread illuminating apparatus reduces the height of the overall apparatus beyond that disclosed in Kubo.

Applicant respectfully submits that, at least for the reasons discussed above, Kubo does not disclose the combination of features recited in independent claim 1. Further, Applicant respectfully submits that, although reciting separately patentably subject matter, dependent claims 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 include all the features recited in independent claim 1. As such, the combination of features recited in these claims is also not disclosed in Kubo. Applicant respectfully submits that the invention disclosed in Kubo also fails to suggest the combination of features recited in the enumerated claims.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Kubo are respectfully requested.

The Office Action in paragraph 4 rejects claims 3, 6 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Kubo and U.S. Patent No. 6,295,104 to Egawa et al. (hereinafter "Egawa"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Egawa discloses a transparent and spread illuminating apparatus with a layer formed under the front surface of a transparent substrate so that the emission of light is allowed to be uniformly irradiated on the face of the transparent substrate (Abstract). Specifically, with reference to Figs. 1 and 2, a transparent member 11 is interposed between a lower face of a transparent substrate 2 (a face opposite to a face having a light reflection pattern 7) and a liquid crystal element L in order to prevent degradation of contrast due to Fresnel reflection occurring on the backface of the transparent substrate 2. The transparent member 11 is not used in a manner that it is in contact with the light reflection pattern 7 of the transparent substrate 2 (see e.g., col. 3, lines 42-58 and col. 5, line 58 to col. 6, line 22). Egawa does not teach a cover formed of a light-transmissible material that is integrally provided over the one surface of the transparent substrate sandwiching a cushioning material consisting of a light transmissible substance in such a manner that the number of ridges are directly covered with the cushioning material, as is recited, among other features, in independent claim 1. Applicant respectfully submits that Egawa therefore does not overcome the shortfalls of Kubo with respect to independent claim 1, as argued above. Further, Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 3, 6 and 9-11 are at least patentable for their dependence on independent claim 1, in addition to the separately patentable subject matter which they recite.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3, 6 and 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of Kubo and Egawa are respectfully requested.

The Office Action, in paragraph 5, rejects claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kubo and U.S. Patent No. 6,323,923 to Hoshino et al. (hereinafter "Hoshino"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

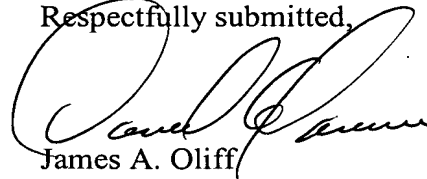
Hoshino discloses a reflective type liquid crystal display device having a first and second transparent substrates and a light scattering liquid crystal layer disposed between those substrates (Abstract). Applicant respectfully submits, however, that Hoshino neither discloses nor suggests a cover formed of a light transmissible material that is integrally provided over the one surface of the transparent substrate sandwiching a cushioning material consisting of a light-transmissible substance in such a manner that the number of ridges are directly covered with the cushioning material, as is recited, among other features, in independent claim 1. As such, Applicant respectfully submits that Hoshino does not overcome the shortfalls of Kubo with respect to independent claim 1, as argued above. At least for its dependence on independent claim 1, claim 12 is therefore patentable over the combination of the applied references.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of the applied references are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-13 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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